

U.S. San Antonio Arsenal,
Office Building
San Antonio Arsenal
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3175 B

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PHOTOGRAPH

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

UNITED STATES SAN ANTONIO ARSENAL,
OFFICE BUILDING

HABS No. TX-3175B

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Location: San Antonio Arsenal, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner: United States Government.

Present Occupants: United States Army and Air Force Recruiting Offices.

Significance: Begun in 1859 and completed in 1860, this building vies with the old United States Custom House in Galveston as the first permanent United States Government building to be erected in Texas. The Office Building is, however, the first permanent military building erected in San Antonio and in the state by the Federal Government.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1859-60.
2. Architect: Possibly John Campbell.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building has been owned by the Federal Government since construction, except for a period of Confederate occupancy.
4. Builders: Brothers John and W.W. Campbell, local San Antonio building contractors.
5. Alterations and additions: In the 20th century the building was added with an addition at its rear side and its west gallery was enclosed.

B. Historical Context: See United States San Antonio Arsenal Depot, HABS No. TX-3175, for partial information on this structure.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building is one of the few built just before the Civil War and exemplifies early military architecture.
2. Condition of fabric: The walls are sound and the building is well maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 28'x 62'.
2. Foundation: Ashlar masonry dressed limestone laid in lime mortar capped by limestone water table with weathered top.
3. Walls: Walls are coursed limestone ashlar, 12 inches high laid in lime mortar. Faces and beds are smoothly dressed. Although the stone was originally left in its natural state, in recent years the walls have been painted white.

A notable feature of the building is the treatment of the gables with their Gothic skew corbels. The lower corbel stone in each case has a cyma molding at the offset angle. The gables have a coping of limestone.

4. Structural system, framing: Floor and ceiling systems are not accessible but are known to be wood joists framed in the common manner.
5. Porches: The Office Building originally had one-story galleries supported by timber piers on both the east and west facades. These were enclosed in recent years with weatherboarding and the enclosed space used for offices.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The opening is spanned by a cut-stone lintel. The door is solid wood with four glass lights and two molded panels below. A one light transom is located above the doorway. The door jamb is 15 inches thick with molded panels.
 - b. Windows: All window openings are spanned with cut-stone lintels. Windows are 3/3 light, inward-opening, wood casement sash with modern exterior screens and plywood awnings.
7. Roof: Standing-seam, metal covered gable roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: Central hall flanked by offices.
2. Flooring: The original flooring was specified as Florida pine "not over four inches wide, planed on both sides, tongued-and-grooved." The present floor covering is 9 x 9 inch modern asphalt tile.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Interior walls and ceilings are either modern gypsum board or "cellotex".
4. Doors: Modern flush type doors.

5. Trim: Modern molded wood trim surrounds doorways. Window openings are splayed and have wood stool and molded trim.
6. Hardware: Windows have modern butt hinges with both spring and barrel latches.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building occupies its original site at the western end of the Arsenal grounds on the southeast corner of the intersection of Whiteley Road and Arnold Street. It faces west with the long axis oriented north and south.

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.
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Architecture Survey
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PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The San Antonio project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in the summer of 1968, and was made possible with funds from HABS and two sponsors, the Bexar County Historical Survey Committee and the San Antonio Conservation Society. Under the direction of James Massey, chief of HABS, the project was carried out by Wesley I. Shank (Iowa State University), project supervisor, and by student assistant architects, Charles W. Barrow (University of Texas); Les Beilinson (University of Miami); William H. Edwards (University of Illinois); and Larry D. Hermesen (Iowa State University) at the HABS field office in the former Ursuline Convent buildings, San Antonio. John C. Garner, Jr., director of Bexar County Architecture Survey, did the outside work on the written documentaries. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for preparation of transmittal to the Library of Congress. Barron Dennis took one photograph of the structure in 1968.